
NEWBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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Horse Power

The earliest commercial lake boat on Sunapee was propelled by horse power. It was in 1854, when state Senator Timothy Haskins, New London, and William Cutler used Yankee ingenuity to build a horseboat that was capable of carrying fifty passengers. It was a big box with an inclined treadmill in the middle of it. Two horses placed in the box had to keep walking up hill on the treadmill or slide down into the box. The treadmill turned the paddle wheels. After about eight years it broke up. "Team boats" were popular as ferries in the U.S. from mid-1810s to 1850, then steam power took over.

Barbara Chalmers looked into the history of Lake Sunapee's horseboat for the Sunapee Historical Society's Pocket History Series book on Lake Sunapee passenger boats. This boat was discussed in William C. Sturoc's 1886 *History of Sunapee*. Research into Hoskins & Cutler revealed that Timothy Hoskins (1793-1857) was a Westmoreland, NH grist and sawmill owner and politician who served as president of the NH state senate in 1844. His daughter Carrie married a Sunapee mill owner and lived in the upper village during the 1860s. William Cutler was a leather tanner and currier who lived on High Street in Sunapee's upper village. He left town in 1857.

These boats were hard to control in wind when loaded, so would have been difficult to run up the lake given the prevailing northwest winds. This horseboat was dismantled before the Civil War, but portions of the boat were reported as still recognizable on the Sunapee Harbor shore in 1886. Apparently the only surviving example of a horse boat is on the bottom of Burlington Bay in Lake Champlain, discovered by divers in the late 1980s and now a protected site of the National Register of Historical Places.



Report of the Board of Directors

The Newbury Historical Society continued to remain active in 2023. Throughout the year, the NHS was happy to welcome Marilyn Geddes, Sally Harris, Judy LaPorte, Craig MacKenzie and Patricia Sherman to the Board.

In May, NHS member John Lyons presented a program on the "Newbury Cut" in the Town Offices meeting room. During the summer of 1871, a crew worked around the clock to remove the long, steep granite barrier blocking the way to the harbor. One year later, the track to Claremont was completed, and this vital link brought new business to Newbury, carrying the first wave of summer visitors from all around to Lake Sunapee. The program was well attended and John later presented the same program at the John Hay Estate at The Fells and to the Country Squires in Grantham.

The NHS collaborated with the Center Meeting House on several programs throughout the year, including a joint effort to have a presence at Old Home Day. One program related to vendue, or pauper auctions, which were held throughout New England in the early 1800s. It was the custom to bid off the support of the town's poor and indigent at public auction to the lowest bidder. Town records list the name of each pauper, the name of the successful bidder and the amount the town must pay to the winning bidder. Research in old town records indicated that the Town of Newbury participated in this practice.

It is with regret that the board received a letter of resignation from Gay Sheary. Gay served on the board for many years and was a pivotal part of the Historic House Marker program. Having spent summers in Blodgett Landing at an early age, her historical insights were very valuable to our discussions. Her presence on the board will be missed.

Board of Directors: Paula Falkowski, Deane Geddes, Marilyn Geddes, Sally Harris, Judy LaPorte, John Lyons, Craig MacKenzie, Patricia Sherman, Bill Weiler (Emeritus) and Margie Weiler.

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Reflections on our Old House

by John Lyons

We were fortunate to find our old house in 1978. It has 20 acres, in part field. Over the years we discovered features of the land and the home that were curious. For example, the double stone wall that bisects the property, the large hewn timbers that frame the house, and the huge boulders that form the U-shape cellar. A little investigation, with the help of the Newbury Historical Society, I found the answers to these questions and more!

A search of the deeds of the late 1700s showed two brothers named Morse bought lot 37, 100 acres on what became Morse Hill Road. More on designation of "lot" later. John Morse took the southern half, our home, and Timothy took the northern half. They grew up in Newbury, Massachusetts, about halfway between Boston and Portsmouth, NH near the Merrimack River.

At the time Newbury, Massachusetts and Newbury (it was called Fishersfield in 1790) New Hampshire were quite different. One well settled with conveniences of the time, and our Fishersfield, a wilderness with 330 persons in 1790. Why would John, Timothy and other Newbury settlers leave such comfort and convenience? Conveniences such as a navigable road, schools, choice of church, and neighbors that formed a community.

Southern New England Expands

New Hampshire's rural settlement was influenced by the expansion of population of states to the south. Between 1710 and 1760 the population of southern New England, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island quadrupled from 100,000 to 400,000. By 1790 most of the farm land in Massachusetts had been divided into manageable farms and towns.

While it might seem to make sense to divide a farm into smaller parts for the children as they grew up, it was custom to follow the rule of *primogeniture*. This is the right (by law or custom) of the firstborn legitimate child to inherit the parents' entire or main estate in preference to shared inheritance among all or some children, any illegitimate child or any relative. In most contexts it means inheritance for the firstborn son.

Over the years, farms in southern New England had been divided to a size that would support a family; to divide it further was not economically feasible. To establish a farm and family of their own, children moved away taking jobs in cities or moving north. As the prime farm land was taken up in lower New England, there was decreased opportunity for young people to "pioneer" new farms and the cheap land in New Hampshire and Vermont became more attractive. John and Timothy Morse could have taken laborer-type jobs, but farming was not in their future in Newbury, Massachusetts.

The lands west of the Appalachian Mountains were not available after The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was issued by King George III following the Treaty of Paris, which ended the Seven Years' War between the English and French. The treaty transferred

French territory east of the Mississippi to England, except New Orleans, which went to Spain; the French kept Canada. The Proclamation prohibited all settlements west of a line drawn along the Appalachian Mountains, which was set aside as an Indian Reserve.

Settling Fishersfield/Newbury

Families from Massachusetts and Connecticut were some of the settlers of New Hampshire's interior after 1760, migrating sometimes as a group. The first Newbury settler was Zephaniah Clark in about 1767. Before that he was one of the first settlers of Newport according to *The History of Newport*. He came from New London, Connecticut, perhaps using the Connecticut River as his highway. He built in Newbury near what is now the traffic circle on Route 103 near Mt. Sunapee.

Early Newbury settlers bought lots of 100 acres or more. Our home was part of lot 37, the southern half settled by John Morse. Later, John added lot 27, and Timothy added lot 38 to his northern half of lot 37. Both lots abutted their homestead lots.

This lot layout is quite familiar to Newbury residents under the phrase used today: "real estate subdivision." The table shows the town's population has quadrupled in the forty years between 1970 and 2010, and many subdivisions were made. Today, the subdivision of a fifty-acre parcel, for example, involved building a road, sometimes a "spec" house, and dividing the acreage into lots of two acres or more.

Newbury Population				
1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
509	961	1,347	1,702	2,072

Dividing the Town in 1700s

The subdivision process in the late 1700s in Newbury was similar. Its history starts in the early 1600s when the King granted much of New Hampshire to John Mason, who didn't do much with the rural areas; it was uninhabited wilderness.

Let's jump ahead to the middle 1700s when the southern New England population was growing. John Mason's grant was acquired in 1746 by a dozen wealthy, politically connected Portsmouth men who were known as the Masonian Proprietors (owners of Mason's grant). Their plans were to increase their wealth.

The people who were already settled (squatters) were given quit-claim deeds and the town was divided into lots of 500 and 100 acres. The 500-acre lots that were kept for the proprietors would become quite valuable when the town became settled. Near the center of each township, they set aside land for a meeting house to be built within ten years, a burying ground, and a militia training field. We find those places today in Newbury at the junction of 103 and 103A. The 1809 map shows the Center Meeting House, Lake Cemetery and a "Parade" ground for militia training. Lots were also set aside for a minister and a school.

Buyers of lots had to adhere to standards just as is done today in a subdivision. They had to clear and enclose a specific number of acres and build a house within three years. If buyers were unable to meet the conditions, the property would revert to the Proprietors.



Remembering Joe Digilio

Newbury lost a very popular resident on April 9, 2024. Joe Digilio was born on June 12, 1926 in New London Hospital. His life was a mixture of hard work, dedication, and resilience. His roots were deeply embedded in Baker Hill, where he attended a one-room schoolhouse before heading to Newport for high school. His life took a patriotic turn during World War II when he served in the Army Air Corps.

Growing up on a farm with four brothers and a sister, Joe learned the value of teamwork and commitment. The family worked together to grow vegetables, tend to chickens, and milk cows. Joe's early experiences included selling vegetables door to door with his father or a brother.

As he embarked on married life with Beverly and started a family, Joe sought additional income. His journey led him to OD Hopkins, where he constructed ski lifts before dedicating himself to the Mt. Sunapee State Park Ski Area. Even with a full-time job, Joe continued to work the family farm, cultivating vegetables and selling them at the family farm.

He did his civic duty by being a member of the Newbury Volunteer Fire Department for many decades and for serving on the Newbury Zoning Board; including chairing the board.

For almost three decades, Joe worked the Mt. Sunapee State Park Ski Area as an aerial lift mechanic, showcasing his skills and commitment. Retirement didn't slow him down; he spent 14 years mowing fairways at Baker Hill Golf Club.

Joe's commitment to hard work and service mirrored his father's longevity. His dad, Dominic Digilio, receiving the Newbury Boston Post (Bicentennial) Cane on June 19, 1982 at age 94, lived a remarkable life until the age of 99. Joe's journey is a testament to the enduring spirit of dedication, family, and community.

Joe had been the oldest resident in town and was scheduled to receive the Cane on May 4.



Joe sorting eggs at the Digilio Farm. The family also sold vegetables, fruits and flowers.



LADY OF THE LAKE



WILKINS & CILLEY,

At the Head of the Lake, Fishersfield, N. H. respectfully inform the Ladies and Gentlemen of this vicinity and the public at large, that they have purchased two

Sail Boats,

For the accommodation of pleasure parties the ensuing season. These boats are completely rigged, in fine style, and are now in operation upon the Lake. The largest is

THIRTY FEET LONG

Built of the best of materials, and copper fastened, and will accommodate

50 PERSONS.

The Leader is a smaller boat, and is calculated more particularly for fishing parties.

MR WILKINS has for many years been a son of old Neptune, and flatters himself that his long experience and skill in the management of water craft, will give a sufficient assurance of SAFETY in navigating the lake in these boats; and his



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Mount Sunapee Store and Post Office

The NHS recently received the antique post office boxes and clerk's window that were in the CHM Perkins & Sons general store at Mount Sunapee. Briana Morena, granddaughter of Herbert and Marion Smith, donated the items after Herb Smith passed away. The store has been in the family for five generations. The Mount Sunapee Rail Road Station was situated behind the store.



CHM Perkins & Sons Store, C 1930's



C 1920's



C 1980



